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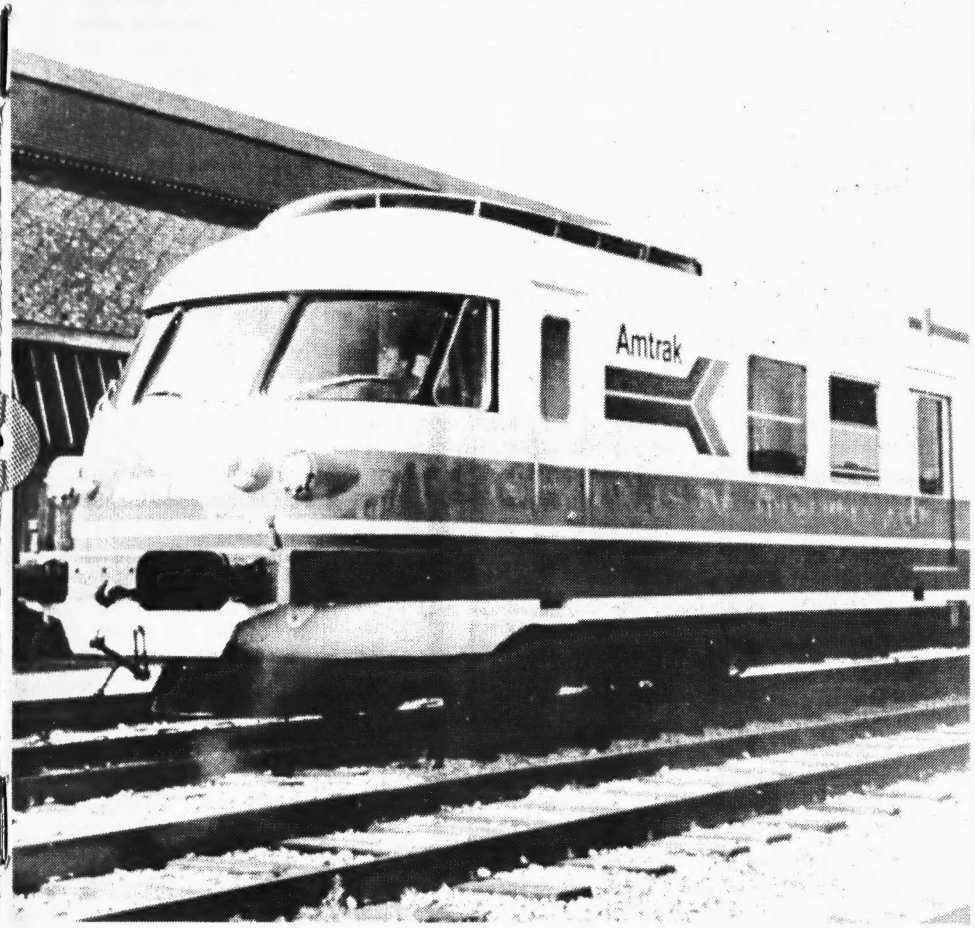
RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

VOL. 3 NO. 15
FIRST ISSUE OF
AUGUST 1973
#65



Franco-American Turbo Canadian Rail Strike

ON THE COVER: One of Amtrak's two new French-built turbine-powered trains photographed outside the ANF-Frangeco factory at Crespin, France prior to delivery to this country. See article elsewhere in this issue. Photo by Amtrak.

LETTERS

Lest anyone's faith in the long-revered railroad safety record be so severely shaken by the report of the PANAMA LIMITED derailment in the last RTN that he forsakes train travel altogether, a footnote to that derailment might help put things back into perspective.

After the wreck, passengers were offered the option of returning to Chicago to board another train or of completing their trip south on Gulf Transport (ICG) buses. Well, the next evening a busload of "survivors" was plodding its way thru Memphis when--you guessed it--the bus crashed into a truck, injuring two previously uninjured persons and, of course, delaying thru passengers again.

Mike Chamblain

Memphis, Tennessee

I read with interest the article about the PANAMA LIMITED derailing at Chebanse. I am a passenger (Amtrak) engineman on the ICG and I know of no 55mph slow order on that section of track July 12. The normal speed is 79 and the baggageman on the train that derailed told me the engineman running that night told him he was going 79 at the time of the derailment. Somehow a newspaper reporter must have picked up the 55mph figure from someone not familiar with the area. Also from my experience the track at Chebanse was very good even over the trailing point housetrack switch where the derailment started. The cause being a part falling from one of the cars is certainly believable to me.

Raymond A. Cook

Park Forest, Illinois

I've just received my copy of the Second July issue of RTN and, of course, read the piece on the Case for the FLORIDIAN with keen interest. However, I noted a couple errors in the best times shown for the former steam-powered SOUTH WIND.

(1) The Chicago to Louisville run was never made in as fast a time as 4hr 45min. The best was 5hr 30min southbound and 5hr 35min northbound during the winter of 1940-41 and thru the 1941-42 winter season, after which time was gradually lengthened as the years went by.

(2) On the other hand, the Chicago-Miami time was even faster during 1940-42 than your quoted 30hr 25min. The southbound "peak" was 29hr 10min during the summer and fall of 1941. Previous to August 1941 it had been 29.30 and reverted again to that timing in the winter 1941-42 timetable. Northbound time held steady at 29.30 throughout this period.

I won't add my brickbats to those already tossed at the absurdly slow schedule of the FLORIDIAN! Just thought you'd like this information for the record.

Don Steffee

Brooklyn, New York

Your article, Case for the FLORIDIAN, left out the most important aspect; a practical solution. A route thru Indianapolis and Louisville would be the best, but unfortunately present conditions prohibit a viable operation over this segment and it probably will be quite a while before the PC tracks are put back in shape. The FLORIDIAN, however, doesn't have much time left and immediate action must be taken.

The National Association of RR Passengers has suggested a Chicago-Evansville-Nashville routing via the L&N as an option to the PC route, together with a Detroit-Toledo-Dayton-Cincinnati-Louisville-Nashville segment with thru cars from Cleveland/Columbus cut in at Cincinnati. On the southern portion of the run the train would bypass Jacksonville and run south from Thomasville, Georgia along the west coast of Florida to Plant City, where convenient bus connections would be made to Tampa/St. Petersburg, and then across the state to Miami.

Convenient bus service could be provided to and from Indianapolis at Terre Haute, or at a closer point if Amtrak switches to the ex-Monon route between Chicago and Louisville. But a switch must be made and made soon. Also vital are the links to Detroit and the five large Ohio cities, especially since Ohio sends more visitors to Florida than any other state (a fact that obviously hasn't slipped past Auto-Train).

NARP also proposes connections from Kansas City and St. Louis and thru cars from Louisville to New Orleans via Montgomery and Mobile. The train would run on a 2 day-1 night schedule. These moves should help push that 55% figure (p. 14 of last issue) far upward.

The 56% figure for the BROADWAY could be upped considerably if Amtrak would reroute it via Youngstown-Cleveland-Toledo to Chicago with thru cars to Detroit and connecting bus service at Hudson, Ohio to Akron and Canton. The BROADWAY's present schedule between Chicago and Fort Wayne could be maintained with an RDC run. (There could also be a bus connection between Fort Wayne and Waterloo, Indiana.) An additional RDC could be run between Chicago and Indianapolis.

NARP's proposed re-scheduling and re-routing would have the westbound BROADWAY depart five hours later so to better serve intermediate Midwestern points. The Eastern schedule would be virtually the same and both would be complemented by a second Chicago-New York train--extensions of Empire trains #73-74 via the old NYC route.

William H. Snorteland

Cleveland, Ohio

Negative Amtrak. The case for the FLORIDIAN is open-ended. Just get us mad enough. What a waste of the nation's energies, defending and upending a wrong-wrong-wrong Amtrak decision, when we should be devoting our energies constructively to the future. Just get us mad enough, Amtrak, and out you go. We legislated Character into Railroading when we legislated Amtrak. You are showing us the absence.

Cleveland was one. It wasn't that you held Ohio to its promise to subsidize, but it was the way you did it. In your understandable bureaucratic foulup you suddenly discovered the cost of another year of operating the LAKE SHORE thru Cleveland Union Terminal. Instantly, in the worst tradition ascribed to Commodore Vanderbilt, you damned the sensibilities of the traveling public, an Ohio public very much under the gun of the anti-passenger train anti-Cleveland subway pro-Great Lakes airport landfill Cleveland Plain Dealer. The people never had a chance--to enjoy the clean, on-time, hospitable LAKE SHORE provided by Penn Central's Bill Moore. All right. So Cleveland was a fluke. You had a promise, they didn't live up, you called in the note. Excused.

Turbo. Parkersburg. Experiment. Turbo in mountain railroading, as I was advocating a daily roundtrip VEGAN SAN DIEGAN connecting with all trains/connecting buses and the LARK. LARK, overnighter for businessmen who need to relax but can't spend daytime on train to do it. LARK, reported able to be sold out daily if it had been running. LARK, that could have been equipped by running ZEPHYR thru. All right. You were learning how to Turbo in the mountains, such as thru Cajon Pass. VEGAN SAN DIEGAN, that could have supplied early morning Los Angeles market also. Turbos instead for another (existing, rather than Las Vegas) market where we wish them well.

But Turbos gimmick. Aircraft construction. Non-standard parts. Hard to get at

page 3

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 15 (Whole No. 65), First Issue of August, 1973. Published twice monthly by Message Media, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709. Subscription $6.00 per year; single copy 25¢. STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large; Kenneth Maylath, East Coast Correspondent; Peter Roehm, Northeastern Correspondent; Doug Ellis, Staff Photographer.
Scheduled mailing date for this issue: August 14, 1973.

for repairs. The more we think on it, the more we agree with Professor Day (LETTERS, last issue). What's wrong with standard conventional modern passenger cars, including the evolutionary Canadian LRC and British APT, the improved Metroliner trucks on the way? No Turbo was ever as magnificant as Southern Pacific's COAST DAYLIGHT, in sheer luxury, comfort, beauty, tavern, baggage elevators, train speaker system, elegance, joy... No one ever better ensconced than on any number of trains, the northern, the central, the southern transcontinentals, the BROADWAY, CENTURY, PANAMA LIMITEDS, many others. There were no mid-train observations, no SUPER CHIEF sans lounge.

FLORIDIAN. "Railpax" said the reason that route was chosen was because in the future Tallahassee could be serviced. Did you try to service Tallahassee, Amtrak? Did you, using your layover Jacksonville padding, adjust the FLORIDIAN schedule to connect with SUNSET LIMITED connection? How about Atlanta-Chicago FLORIDIAN service via Birmingham? Were you busy elsewhere? Admit it...to DOT, FRA, OMB.

Until next year's nationwide computer reservation system is working, bugs-free and equal to the demand for the first time in Amtrak's life, not a train should be dropped. Have the guts, Amtrak, to say so. No Bakersfield stub train. Rail passengers, not automobiles have prior rights; LARK before autotrain. Listen to plankowners. This plankowner made sure the Amtrak Law was signed while others took it for granted and time trickled towards pocket veto. The President and I both were in San Clemente on Friday, October 30, 1970. And so was my short-short in the Long Beach Independent, Press-Telegram: "The passage of the Railroad Passenger Bill is the most exciting opportunity in transportation since the advent of the streamline train."

Robert J. Swan

Long Beach, California

The decision to drop the NATIONAL LIMITED comes from a recent DOT study, apparently made by some bureaucratic types from their desks in Washington. They decided that the NATIONAL, along with the FLORIDIAN and the Richmond-Newport News connection of the JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY were all losing too much money, and therefore must be chopped. They never took into account that all three of these trains are performing a definite service in their respective areas.

And now comes the rub. Despite heavily-padded schedules in some cases slower than the pre-World War II steam era; despite decaying roadbeds and rough rides and surly crews and aging equipment; despite terrible "on time" records and air conditioning that won't work and depressing depots and dirty car windows: all six trains up for discontinuance showed marked ridership increases this past year!

People all over the country are discovering the passenger train. In the light of the energy crisis, clogged highways, and jammed airports, it is becoming clear that train service must become a major form of transportation. Amtrak's job is to increase service, not drop trains!

When one cannot get into his car without encountering a traffic jam; when one cannot travel the Turnpike without at least one semi-trailer pulling out directly in front of him; when "Interstate Highway" really means border-to-border construction; when being "stacked up" over O'Hare airport takes longer than the jet trip itself; when a plane trip means a 2-hour drive at both ends, being packed into a cabin like sardines and eating tasteless food off plastic trays; when one almost is overcome from exhaust fumes from too many vehicles; when one cannot ride a bus for any distance without almost passing out from the heat, stench, and bumps; one comes to the point when he wishes for the convenience, economy, relaxation, and general "well-being" of the passenger train.

Robert W. Holmes

Mount Union, Pennsylvania

(Mr. Holmes says that people in his area were pretty upset over the proposed discontinuance. His complete letter, excerpted above, appeared in the Huntingdon (PA) Daily News July 20.--Ed.)

I want to tell you how much I enjoyed Paul Rayton's article (RTN, 2nd June issue) as I have been on virtually all the trains he rode and have found them to be just as he described them. Amtrak is a mess and needs reorganizing, and the Southern and D&RGW are well-operated roads and a pleasure to ride.

On my recent trip in the U.S. and Canada I rode 14 trains including FLORIDIAN, ST. CLAIR, Rapido, Turbo, CANADIAN, SOUTHERN CRESCENT, and PATRIOT. The Turbo was worst of all; the CANADIAN best with CN's Rapido next. So far this year I have ridden by train 20,441 miles in the U.S., Mexico and Canada. I have always thought and still do that trains are safest, but Amtrak and Penn Central have some terrible track and dangerous track. The worst is Louisville to Chicago on PC, Chicago to Omaha on BN, and Chicago to New York on PC, altho PC has some good track out of Buffalo. In Canada the TH&B had the best track Toronto to Buffalo.

Reckon I'll still ride them as long as they are around. A long bus ride is to be dreaded, also driving a car.

L. T. Muse

Nashville, Tennessee

The past two issues of RTN (2nd June, 1st July) are leaving me wondering just what in the Hell is going on out there in the field of railroad passenger transportation. It is like a Watergate of revelations in the passenger railroading arena. Between Paul Rayton's article, Ken Maylath's attempt to get to and from the INDEPENDENCE LTD., plus others along with excerpts on air and bus service, one begins to laugh and would continue to do so as if it were all one big slapstick comedy joke--except that it is all for real; and it is most frightening that no one seems to care. Even the prideful Canadians are letting their rail service slide into rack and ruin. The trade journal, Traffic World, recently editorialized on the Northeast problem, with some reference to previous passenger days, by simply declaring that one of the big problems is just that no one really cares at all. And it is the same, apparently, at Amtrak--indifference and apathy. And with directors like Monk, Quinn and Moore, how could there ever be a chance at recovery? How on earth the Rock Island, Rio Grande, and Southern have managed to escape this affliction is beyond understanding. They could have just continued their trains on a so-so basis, enough to get by with, but they didn't. They, overall, do better than Amtrak even tries to do. And it does show what a railroad can still do as far as operating passenger trains is concerned when they set their mind to it.

Doesn't anyone take any responsibility for anything anymore? Is there no pride in what one does or hopes to do? Is it all passing the buck and denying any part of anything? We certainly face a challenge if we are to get passenger railroading back on track; or, for that matter, even air and bus transportation so that a fully intermodal system can work properly.

Otherwise, I too rode the INDEPENDENCE LIMITED between Pittsburgh and Alexandria and felt that it was one of the better steam runs that I have been on in recent years. We arrived early at destination, so much so, in fact, that I was thrown off guard and thus took an earlier flight to Boston which connected with an earlier B&M train to Rockport and thus home at a decent hour for a night's sleep. And that airline was the financially-strapped, scandal-ridden, politically-conspiring American and the flight was a good one, too.

And, further, I just completed a 6500-mile flight with a friend from Boston to Calgary to San Francisco to Boston. Amazingly, I had an excellent flight on each of the four carriers involved (Delta, CP Air, Western, United) and could offer no complaints whatsoever. CP Air allows service such as I have never before seen on an airline (I hear it may be threatened)--I must have gained ten pounds on that flight, and only in coach class: orange juice on the ground at Montreal; coffee enroute to Ottawa; full breakfast (five eggs in omelet, two sausages, two slices Canadian bacon, two large rolls, jam, butter, apple juice, grapefruit slides, coffee) to Toronto;

(continued on page 18)

AMTRAK ASKS FOR DESIGNS FOR NEW PASSENGER CARS

In a July 26 press release Amtrak said it is asking American industry to design this country's "next generation" of standard rail passenger cars. The corporation sent letters recently to 13 U.S. manufacturing and industrial design firms, asking for the design proposals. Amtrak will order at least 100 new cars initially, to be used on all routes except those serving New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Washington, where tunnels put restrictions on car heights. The cars must be of all stainless steel construction with maximum length 85 feet and unloaded weight of 80,000 pounds. Bi-level cars were not ruled out, but maximum standardization of the exteriors and mechanical and auxiliary equipment are wanted, but with the "greatest possible" interior flexibility. The cars should be capable of being configured as high-density or long-distance coach, parlor car, lounge car, bedroom car, roomette, dormitory car or diner by means of insertion of modular interiors. The interiors might be built separately from the body shells, thus speeding up construction time by overlapping work time. The cars should combine maximum saleable space with the best attainable ride at speeds up to 125mph on conventional track.

The total cost of the first car order would be $30-50 million. Amtrak's Roger Lewis said he wants a 1980's-quality car. Defending the long delay Amtrak has shown in attempting to obtain new equipment, Mr. Lewis indicated that it was wise to wait to test the market, since Amtrak's requirements now are different from what they were at the outset. Also, Amtrak wants cars that will last 20 years, so a good deal of preparation was required, Lewis indicated.

CONGRESS ADJOURNS WITHOUT SETTLING AMTRAK'S FUNDING BILL

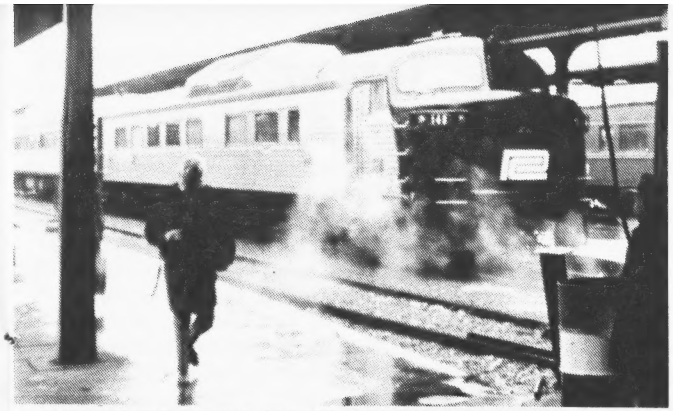
Congress recessed August 3 for a month, and evidently still up in the air is Amtrak's appropriations bill for the present fiscal year. The corporation is operating under a continuing resolution. The Senate Commerce Committee has been working on a bill granting Amtrak $185 million, while the Senate Appropriations Committee wants to let it have $115 million. Meanwhile, the House has a bill for about $107 million. Compromises will have to be worked out when Congress comes back after Labor Day. Senate bill S.2016, for $185 million, has a number of interesting provisions, including granting Amtrak the power of eminent domain to acquire property, the requirement to initiate at least one experimental route each year that must be continued 2 years, and which the DOT Secretary would declare part of the permanent system if patronage were satisfactory. It also requires Amtrak's funds to remain unimpounded.

PRESIDENT NIXON SIGNS TRANSIT BILL

The $22.9 billion highway-aid bill was signed into law by the President Aug. 13. This is the bill that is said to put a foot into the door toward "busting the trust fund" (see last issue). Detailed examination of the bill reveals that money for rapid rail transit is comparatively meager, however, and not rapid in coming. See analyses made by Wall Street Journal transportation writer Albert R. Karr (Aug. 7 & 13) for lucid exposition of the bill's terms.

NEW ROUTES AND DAILY SCHEDULES CONFIRMED BY AMTRAK

The new routes out of Chicago, partially subsidized by the state of Illinois and reported here earlier, have been confirmed in an Amtrak August 5 press release. The new trains are to start running as soon as possible. Also confirmed is our earlier report that the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR and the COAST STARLIGHT will continue operating daily until at least October 28, the time of the fall schedule change. Amtrak is currently handing out schedules which incorporate the recently revised L.A.-San Diego times by means of a sticker placed on the timetable cover. The BLUE RIDGE is the name chosen for Amtrak's Washington-Cumberland train.



At South Station on a wet Boston day George Hyko photographed Penn Central commuter RDC's 140 & 141 with the modified noses. They formerly were part of New Haven's ROGER WILLIAMS, and are now being used by Amtrak on the BAY STATE, Boston-Springfield-New Haven. This run is partially financed by the state of Massachusetts.

TWO HIGH-SPEED LINES BACK IN OPERATION. The two commuter lines commonly compared, BART and Philadelphia's Lindenwold line were down with overlapping strikes. The Lindenwold line resumed service August 10 after a 16-day strike. The BART strike which began July 2 ended in a settlement July 31, but the line wasn't open to the public again until August 6, since a few days were required to re-check the automatic system and limber up the equipment (it doesn't run on weekends). BART staged a public relations coup August 10 when it took officials and the press on a flawless round-trip run thru the trans-bay tube to San Francisco and back (the first train to run thru the tube under its own power did so August 6). The trip had S.F. critics praising the system for once. At the same time it was made known that regular service to S.F. won't start until next summer, but trains will run this fall between S.F. & Daly City, disconnected from the Eastbay.

NORTHWEST WANTS TURBO TRAINS. Various groups promoting the 1974 Spokane Exposition will be asking Amtrak for Turbo service between Seattle & Spokane and Portland & Spokane. They'd also like daily service on the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA during the Expo. Unfortunately, many of these groups also want enlarged freeways for Spokane.

TALL THINGS. Las Vegas high-rises and Santa Fe hi-level cars. Paul Rayton photographed one of the Las Vegas Fun Trains last year in that Nevada city. An Amtrak spokesman said last month that the corporation is considering running the train this fall as a weekend trip, continuing on from Los Angeles as far as Salt Lake City.

canadian news letter

CANADIAN RAILROAD STRIKE CONTINUES

On July 26 joint public announcements by Canadian National and CP Rail appeared, reading as follows: "NOTICE TO RAILWAY PASSENGERS. The associated non-operating railway unions have begun regional strike action against Canadian National, CP Rail and nine other railways in Canada. This action by the unions make it impossible for the railways to continue to offer dependable long-distance passenger service to the public. Accordingly, Canadian National and CP Rail announce that transcontinental passenger train service on both systems between Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver has been suspended as of Thursday, July 26, and will not be restored until further notice. However, the railways will continue to maintain the operation of shorter-distance intercity passenger trains and commuter services, except when strike action forces the temporary cancellation of these services in a specific region. In such cases, service will be restored as soon as possible after regional strike action ends. The railways regret the inconvenience and uncertainty facing the travelling public as a result of this situation."

On that date, a selective strike of 48 hours duration began in Ontario, paralyzing rail service and creating commuting havoc. To add to the woes, CP Air was in its second day of a machinist strike--the first strike in its history--which cut its service down to 40% of normal. Passengers traveling east on CN's SUPER CONTINENTAL were picked up at Sudbury by a chartered Air Canada airliner, and buses were used to complete the travelers' trips.

The striking union planned a series of 2-day selective strikes, mostly province by province. While local trains were affected in each province or larger area hit, the transcontinental service was annulled because trains could not complete their journey across Canada during the regional walkouts. Talks resumed for a time but broke off again, leading to a second series of strikes beginning August 7 in Quebec. As of this writing there is no settlement in sight.

Amtrak's PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL to Vancouver was annulled July 28, then restored about August 3. First run to be cancelled was the northbound 6:15pm trip from Seattle. Amtrak substituted chartered buses for the international train. The MONTREALER/WASHINGTONIAN was also cancelled between Burlington, VT and Montreal, with buses substituted for that Central Vermont portion during the strikes.

CN'S RESTORED AFTERNOON Rapido, back on the Montreal-Toronto run after a 1-week absence following the latest demist of TurboTrain service, has been running with both both club-galley cars and regular dining cars...

IN CONTRAST WITH CN's concerted effort to diminish loadings on the transcontinental and maritimes long-distance services, loadings on the "corridor" runs west from Toronto to the U.S. border at Windsor (Detroit) and Sarnia (Port Huron) seem to be increasing. Trains are longer than comparable runs 3-5 years ago. One factor may be the popularity of the Tempo trains, even tho they have been criticized as light, noisy and rough-riding...

CN'S TRANSCONTINENTAL CONSISTS have been shortened, as predicted earlier in RTN. No heavyweight sleeping cars have appeared in early editions of the 2-section SUPER CONTINENTAL. This shortens the Toronto section of the SUPER, for instance, from 9 to 6 sleepers. About the only heavyweight cars on CN trans-con service now appear to be the 2300-series lounges which run as far west as Edmonton, replaced there by ex-Milwaukee full domes for the trip thru the Rockies to Vancouver...

PAUL RAYTON'S UNUSUAL photo of the two CN and CP transcontinental streamliners side-by-side near Capreol which we printed in the last issue of 1972 may now be seen in its full living color as the centerfold photo of Trains magazine, September issue...

THE RUMOUR MILL in Ontario says that "combined operation" of the CN and CP transcontinental services may begin this fall at the October time change, with all service west of Sudbury, Ontario over CP. This is not very believable, especially in light of previous "plans" that called for approximately six trains per week in each direction, 3 via CN and 3 via CP during all "off" months. Should Ottawa actually go thru with such a plan there will be some rough times. This would, in effect, end the CN SUPER CONTINENTAL runs, and is certainly more drastic than the best of the combination plans, which would have seen CN handle all Toronto-Sudbury cars and CP all Montreal-Sudbury cars, each line carrying one train per day west from Sudbury to the West Coast...

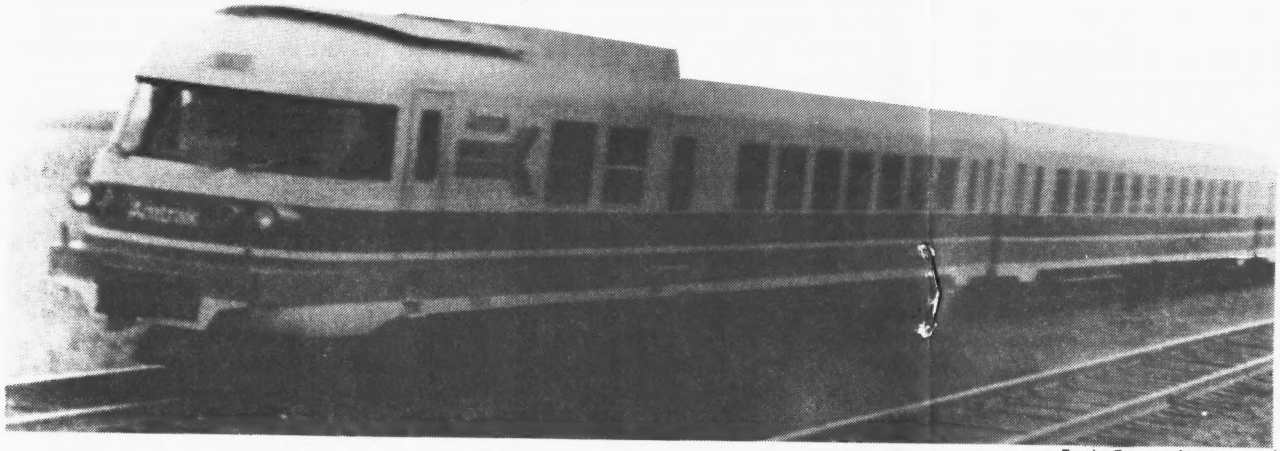
CN'S EXECUTIVE VP J.W.G. MacDougall told the press July 31 that preliminary investigation of the CN Turbo wreck on July 20 (see our last issue) showed that the Turbo had run a red signal. He said there was no evidence of any malfunction in the equipment. Among those aboard the train were Noel Lahners, quality control inspector, Gary Stewart, air brake and lubrication engineer, and Robert Foehr, trainmaster, all of Illinois Central Gulf Railroad. The rear car of the Turbo was not badly damaged, so that one "power dome" car might be salvaged. Indications are at present that Amtrak will use the second CN Turbo it's buying to use on the Boston-NY run to replace the American Turbo damaged recently...

CN HAS PINPOINTED the troubles of its 3 TurboTrains which ran for less than one week in June before being withdrawn. CN says the main problem is with the lubrication system of the gear boxes. Modifications are underway. Altho tests have been scheduled, CN will make no comment regarding resumption of service. Thus Turbo Phase 4 (if there is one) may be a while in coming. Phase 1 saw Turbo operated for 2 weeks beginning Dec. 12, 1968 after CN announcements had earlier indicated Turbo would be operated summer, 1967 for the Montreal Expo. Phase 2 came in 2 stages. The first was one daily Turbo 7:45am from Montreal and Toronto beginning mid-May, 1970. The second stage saw two daily trips inaugurated summer, 1970, but both trips operated 10min ahead of a conventional Rapido. An announced third stage, with Turbo and Rapido schedules separated, failed to materialize when Turbo was removed from service a second time Feb. 1, 1971. Phase 3, of course, was the blitzkrieg 1-week festival of mechanical ineptitude June 22-27, 1973. Phases 1 and 2 terminated under the impact of severe winter conditions, and hopefully at least the cold-weather problems have been eliminated for good. But the "Curse of the TurboTrain," as the old Toronto Telegram put it in 1969, appears as lively as ever...

OTHER TRAVELERS CONFIRM the report of RTN reader Harry Spilman (2nd July issue) who found no sleeping cars on CN's jasper-Prince Rupert train west of Prince George, B.C. The summer consist (until the strike) included 2 coaches and one diner-lounge. This exemplifies further CN's enormous cutback on sleeper space. In summer, 1971, for example, CN ran 3 sleepers daily Prince Rupert-Jasper, usually one 10/6, one 8/4/4, and one 8-bedroom Skytop lounge (ex-Milwaukee Road). On tour movements to and from the Alaska Ferry System or cruise vessels calling at Prince Rupert, up to 3 additional sleepers would be carried, and sometimes an extra lounge car! To cut back on these services as tourism rises so spectacularly each year in the Northwest is a heavy slap at the public. In contrast, the number of cruise ship departures to B.C. and Alaskan waters in summer, 1973 is at an all-time high, with cruise patronage rising 15-25% per year, depending on which steamship company you talk to...

PAUL RAYTON, TRAVELING in Canada, corrects our phrase "gradual downgrading" of CP dining car service used here last issue. He says the CANADIAN, for example, now has no flowers on the tables, not even plastic ones. His word for the downgrading is "precipitous." A part of the problem comes from the CTC ruling that subsidies for dining, sleeping and parlor cars are not allowable, thus putting pressure on rail executives already biased against passenger service to decimate these services...

Franco-American Turbo



The present model is the 2nd-generation RTG series, an improved version of the ETG trains built by ANF-Frangeco for the French railways, and is capable of 125mph and has been known to reach 160 on suitable track. The present speed limit on the ICG route is 70mph, however. The New York Times (Aug. 12) reported an Amtrak spokesman as saying that with some track work the speed could be increased to 80 and 30 minutes cut from the schedule.

Delivery of the Turbo marks the arrival of the 1st foreign train planned for regular use in the U.S. in modern railroad history. If Amtrak finds the trains acceptable, the two leased sets will go into service, and Amtrak has the option to buy them within the 1st year of the lease, and can purchase either 4 or 8 more during that time. The Rohr Corporation of Chula Vista, Calif., signed an agreement with ANF-Frangeco last June 26 that permits the American manufacturer to build the trains under license in North America.

Each 5-car train seats 296 passengers. There are 48 seats in each power unit, 80 in one coach and 76 in another, while the middle car seats 44 and also has a 24-seat grill-bar dining area. The trains are designed as single-class trains, with appointments similar to second-class French ones.

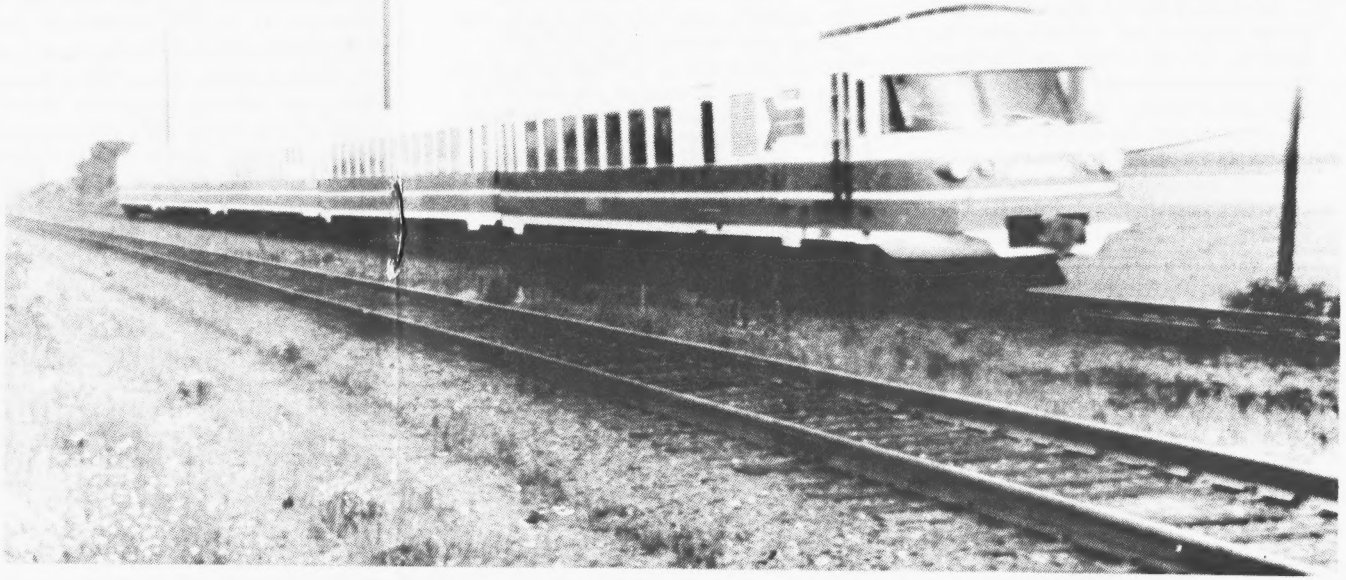
The designation "RTG" indicates "gas turbine train". Each power unit contains a 1140-hp aircraft-type turbine engine, while another 430-hp turbine drives an an alternator supplying electric power for airconditioning and accessories. The transmission is hydraulic-mechanical and also incorporates a hydrodynamic brake. For American use the train will have 3 separate braking systems: hydrodynamic, conventional tread brakes and supplementary disc brakes. Each train is 423 feet in length and 12.3 feet high and weighs 248 tons without passengers. It has a range of 1000 miles, accelerates at 1.05 mph/sec and brakes from 100mph to zero in 4400 feet. It requires an operating crew of four. With these performance characteristics, the train, Amtrak hopes, will revitalize corridor-type service. (Button at left prepared by an individual rail supporter of Madison, Wisconsin.)

The two French turbine-powered trains arrived by ship at New Jersey as scheduled (see last issue) and Amtrak ran them under their own power to Chicago to go into service soon, probably on the Chicago-St. Louis route.

In these first photos by Paul Rayton, the 1st Turbo is heading toward Chicago through Intercourse, Pennsylvania at 10:45am August 10. Amtrak's original tentative timetable for moving the trains to the Midwest got delayed a bit as unloading and preparation for running proceeded. The trains ran under a 50mph speed limit on this break-in run over the route of the BROADWAY LIMITED.

The five-car, bi-directional train is seen head-on above, and a rear view is below. Note that an American coupler has been installed, and the European-type buffers seen in place in our cover photo have been removed. The train's rather soft-spoken European horn still operated. The white train with red and blue stripes (red over blue) carried only a small load of technicians and officials on this, its first self-propelled trip over American soil, on the roller coaster tracks of the Penn Central.

Though not outfitted as poshly as the United Aircraft Turbo and lacking the exciting dome viewing of that train, the French-built vehicle has the advantage of greater reliability and lower noise level than the American-built type. On the Paris-Cherbourg run of the French National Railways, the performance of an earlier model of this Turbo has been described as "spectacular" since it began running in 1970.



SUMMER 1973 - RIDING THE RAILS OFF AMTRAK

by Ken Maylath

It was with some apprehension that I embarked on my 1973 all-rail vacation this year. Just days before departing RTN arrived at my mailbox, complete with Paul Rayton's less than perfect travel experiences across the nation and some letters to the editor that might be described as less than complimentary to Amtrak. Altho a primary purpose of the trip was to sample rail travel south of the border down Mexico way, about half my actual travel time would be spent inside the U.S. On the other hand, things would get underway with a long sample of non-Amtrak service, traveling the Southern's often-praised SOUTHERN CRESCENT from Washington to New Orleans. And Paul Rayton had been lavish in his compliments there.

Things got underway as I boarded the thru cars of the CRESCENT in Baltimore on a warm evening, about 20mins late. My accommodations were located in the sleeper "West Palm Beach," a refurbished Amtrak car en route from N.Y. to L.A. Indeed, it was the only Amtrak car of the nine or so pieces of thru equipment for the CRESCENT. Eight corridor coaches, only one refurbished, brought up the rear of the long consist.

"West Palm Beach" was a pleasant enough car, but not without its minor defects. An electrical problem caused the lights to dim and flicker when the train was stopped, and there was some fogging between the double panes of the window in my roomette. It rode well, however, and the air conditioning was operating properly.

After a 20-min late Washington arrival, one thing that became quickly apparent was the impossibility of doing the required switching in the nation's Capital within the confines of the 27 alloted minutes. Why were the thru cars on the front, rather than the rear? This arrangement means removing the GG-1 in New York, adding the thru cars, then replacing the engine. Simply adding them on the rear would seem faster and easier. It would certainly be so in Washington. No switching could be started until a large load of corridor passengers vacated those 8 cars that were to be cut off. Ten minutes down the drain. Then, the switching itself is quite involved--adding the diner in the middle and the lounge sleeper for Atlanta (complete with its unique master room with shower) on the rear. The whole process took no less than 58 minutes. Too long for what had to be done, thanks to the Washington Union Terminal crews, but still more than 27 minutes' worth. Thus we struggled out 55mins late, most of it not attributable directly to Amtrak or the Southern.

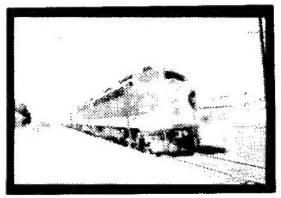
Another point here. The lack of a diner north of Washington is a ridiculous situation. It used to be that the Southern diner was switched for an Amtrak operation in Washington. No more. Amtrak cut it out and apparently feels that a 16 or 17-car train arriving in Washington at 7pm can manage with one snack bar coach.

Needless to say, a large crowd descended quickly on the diner after the switching and before the train ever got out of Washington. By this time my mood and my stomach were ready for a good meal. I wasn't to be disappointed, as the Southern came thru with a menu featuring good variety at prices just a little above Amtrak's. The thick piece of roast beef I ordered was really excellent--right up there with the best meals of my trip. Breakfast rolling thru Georgia in the morning was fine as well--again at prices just a little higher than similar Amtrak fare.

A walk to the diner thru several Southern coaches in Washington revealed that the air conditioning was out, for the moment at least, in a couple of them. They were extremely hot and stuffy. Yet, these same coaches seemed fairly comfortable in the morning. But of one air conditioning failure there was no doubt. The Southern NY-New Orleans sleeper was the victim sometime during the night. As a result, another car was cut in at Atlanta and the passengers transferred, tho the offending car stayed in the consist to New Orleans. It went to show, I guess, that AC failures are not the exclusive property of the NRPC.

Another thing that didn't measure up to advance billing was the timekeeping. True, we were nearly an hour to the bad before ever getting out of Washington. We slipped as much as two hours behind traveling thru Mississippi and eventually backed into the New Orleans terminal 1hr 40min late, at 9:30. Thus, about 45min of our tardiness could be directly put at Southern's doorstep.

The Atlanta-New Orleans dome car is worthy of special compliment. This ex-Wabash BLUE BIRD piece of equipment was fresh out of the shops, according to a crew member, after a tasteful refurbishing. From end to end it had a newness and class which really added something to the train. It wasn't an Amtrak-style refurbishing, with an emphasis on splashy color, but there was no doubt about its being well done.



SOUTHERN CRESCENT photo by Paul Rayton

Altho operations weren't perfect, I did have a generally good impression of my 1150 miles on the Southern. In all honesty, however, I couldn't call it the best train in the country. What I found probably goes to show that during this summer of heavy and revitalized rail patronage even the Southern can have its problems on a given day. Incidentally, I understand that the CRESCENT has been operating in two sections on some days, so good is its business.

Later in my thousands of rail miles, a special side trip to Peoria for my first sampling of the Rock Island's passenger wares. What I found is basically what others have found on this non-Amtrak carrier. Good equipment and often bad track. The PEORIA ROCKET, on a Monday, wasn't very heavy in patronage. The two coaches, diner and all-bedroom sleeper being used as a parlor car left little cause for complaint. On that day my companion and I were the sole occupants of the parlor facilities. We had a private car all the way to Peoria, in essence, and at an extra cost that was modest indeed.

The dining car, with an ample selection of food, provided good eating at prices no higher than Amtrak. The crew members, fine, from conductor to dining car waiters. The RI, with its limited passenger service, is obviously trying to put its best foot forward.

The on-time performance and track conditions are the shortcomings. Assorted signal indications and slow orders put us nearly 15min behind by the time we reached Joliet. The Joliet station, used by Santa Fe and ICG as well as the Rock, was left behind at 7:24 as the SUPER CHIEF, headed by its brand new Amtrak diesels, waited for us to clear. That 15min became a little more than 20 by the time we reached Bureau--that point where the line to Peoria splits off from the mainline to the Quad Cities. It was also the point where the electrical activity in the air really began to do its thing. We passed thru a couple storm fronts between Bureau and Peoria of what was a nasty Midwestern storm. It was interesting as we rolled along in our darkened parlor room, watching the nearly continuous lightning flashes. At times they gave the passing landscape an eerie effect, like the flickering of an old silent movie. Due to the storm or other reasons we were losing more time in the process--another 25min in less than 50 miles. The downpour had stopped by the time we eased into RI's new station, about a mile from downtown Peoria, some 45min late. At least we came thru in one piece. The storm we witnessed was apparently part of the same one which is suspected as a cause of the Ozark Airlines crash at St. Louis that evening.

MULTI-MODAL MAN

By Jim Russell

Those who follow the transportation scene closely must be aware of a significant shift in official attitudes over the past few months or even weeks. The Federal bureaucracy has finally gotten the word that the nation is desperate for a change in transportation priorities, and policies are being shifted in the direction of balancing our transportation system, with de-emphasis on the automobile and increased emphasis on rail transportation. It seems hardly necessary to point out anymore that extreme over-dependence upon the private automobile has created havoc with our cities and made miserable the lives of millions. All the battles have not been fought yet, of course, and public transit and rail transportation are not yet receiving their proper share of monetary support. But the machine is inexorably grinding in that direction.

For nearly three years RTN has been denouncing the evils of motorcar mania, sometimes in the harshest of terms. Now Federal and other public officials are using the same rhetoric, and while nobody seems to want to touch the hot potato of highway death tolls, still things are being said from official mouths that would have sounded outrageously radical a few years back. Yes, the tide is turning, we are happy to say, and now it is time to move on to the next step toward achieving a really smoothly-functioning system of getting around in the nation.

The difficulty with the Washington bureaucracy in terms of dealing with social problems is its strong tendency to stagger from crisis to crisis, unable to cope with a problem until it reaches such enormity that a massive public outcry is heard. Now that the heavy hand of the government has begun to deal with the problem, we are concerned with the manner of its approach, and particularly with its attempt to reduce automobile traffic and pollution in cities.

It has fallen to the Environmental Protection Agency to outline plans for reducing automobile use, and the EPA has come up with plans so gross that they immediately elicit a counter-reaction in the affected areas. They threaten to make a mockery of the real need for traffic relief, and in typical bureaucratic fashion there appears to be no real communication among various agencies that might produce a coordinated realistically geared to the down-to-earth needs of people in cities. The basic bureaucratic failure is that it makes judgments based upon gross figures that may bear little resemblance to the individual cases from which they are derived. (If bureaucrats can't hold more than two numbers in their heads simultaneously, why not replace them with a computer than can?) For the down-to-earth problems experienced by real individuals in real cities, one could start by asking individuals in affected areas just what is really bugging them and what solutions can be proposed.

The government could provide help fastest by starting at the bottom rather than the top and stimulating local areas to clear up local problems. If anybody asked, the answers about automobile problems would probably be fourfold: noise, the stress factor, air pollution, and congestion, in that order. These are the things that subjectively irritate people in and around city traffic. And much of the problem could be alleviated locally simply by rewarding local agencies for enforcing laws already in existence. The too-loud muffler, the overly-smoky exhaust, the drunken or careless driver--these factors could be sharply curtailed

(continued on page 17)

mixed train of thoughts

THE MAILING OF this issue of RTN has been delayed until August 15 in order to include the late coverage of the French Turbo Train arrival on pages 10 & 11..... THE CABLE CARS of San Francisco celebrated their 100th anniversary at 5am August 2 with several hundred people on hand for a motorized recreation of the first car's movement on Clay St. For collectors, the official souvenir publication of the date is San Francisco Magazine (Aug.), newsstand price $1, address 120 Green St., S.F. 94111; official medal in silver ($10) or bronze ($2.50) from Cable Car Medal, 120 Bush St., S.F. 94104..... A VICTORY CELEBRATION was staged Aug. 10 by a commuter group at the Harpers Ferry station. Reason: financial arrangements completed to keep the D.C.-Cumberland train running. Maryland and West Virginia agreed to fork over estimated $400,000 needed..... ICC DOCKET NUMBERS on the FLORIDIAN and NATIONAL LIMITED discontinuance cases are FD 27436 and 27437 respectively..... SOUTHERN RAILWAY PLACED a couple ads for the SOUTHERN CRESCENT in the Washington Post August 6, the first seen since the announcement of the thru sleeper to Los Angeles a few years back..... WHAT DO YOU think passengers on the COAST STARLIGHT out of Oakland northbound viewed from the rear of the round-end observation used July 23? Scenic views of water and mountain? No--the front end of an SP business car... THE COAST STARLIGHT was "hijacked" by about 40 passengers late last month. Northbound at San Luis Obispo July 25 it was delayed by a freight wreck ahead of it. After many hours Amtrak decided to bus everyone on, but a number demanded to remain on the train, so the crew was kept on and the train arrived in Portland about 17hrs late, where it was terminated and turned in order to get it southbound on schedule. Here's Amtrak doing elaborate logistics, including juggling the Seattle-Portland schedules for maximum convenience of riders, while in the old days the railroads would have simply annulled the train (which didn't have decent connections anyway)..... THE REASON FOR the much-commented upon missing dome lounge from the SUPER CHIEF is this: Amtrak set an 18-car limit on train consists, but then wanted to stretch it to 19 when passenger counts mounted, but Santa Fe insisted on its own 18-car limit (they also were responsible for running the SUPER and EL CAP as separate sections on heavy days), so Amtrak added another revenue car on heavy days but removed the dome to keep to the 18 limit, thus satisfying everyone. Except the rail passenger, without whom several people at 955 L'Enfant Plaza would still be working for the airlines..... A NEW BOOK on American rail travel, entitled "USA Train Travel Guide," authored by Robert G. Baxter who wrote a Eurailpass Travel Guide is now available at $3.95 from Rail-Europe, Box 3255, Alexandria VA..... CANADIAN RAIL STRIKE continues as of August 14. Seven of 10 provinces were to experience walkouts the 13th..... INTERESTED IN HELPING form a Pacific Northwest Association of Railroad Passengers? Contact Bob Kelly, E.1203 Indiana St., Spokane, WA 99207..... LONG-DISTANCE CNW bi-level cars have been rented by Amtrak and are being used on some routes out of Chicago, easing Amtrak's equipment problems..... SUN SERIES SLEEPERS of UP are being seen on the SF ZEPHYR. These cars were too nice for UP to let Amtrak have, having been refurbished in 1965, so they are only rented to the corporation for summer use..... AMTRAK'S NEW DIESELS were expected to go onto the West Coast trains, but rumor has it that SP has dreamed up some kind of clearance problem which precludes using them. Meanwhile they are being seen on the tri-weekly NORTH COAST HIAWATHA (this train left Seattle 15mins late August 10 in order to carry any Friday night "commuters" on the schedule of the strike-annulled PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL to Edmonds and Everett, while passengers to more northerly points took an Amtrak charter bus)..... THE EMPIRE BUILDER that left Chicago Aug. 8 had an unexplained emergency brake application near Havre, Montana, leaving about half the 18 cars with a bad set of flat wheels, limiting the speed to 50mph. Then with the train 7hrs late at Lester, WA there was a fire in the dorm.....

THE ODDS ON MAKING IT

Routes	# Runs June	% On-Time June	% On-Time May
Metroliners	810	59.5	56.8
TurboTrains	139	38.1	17.8
Short distance routes			
NY-Washington (conventional trains)	658	84.5	87.3
Boston-Washington	491	44.2	66.9
NY-Boston			
Shore Route	90	58.9	65.3
Inland Route	443	50.3	70.7
NY-Buffalo	300	62.3	71.9
Philadelphia-Harrisburg	488	50.4	41.2
Washington-Cumberland	60	68.3	81.7
Chicago-Carbondale	60	31.7	62.9
Chicago-Detroit	120	78.3	77.4
Chicago-Quincy	60	55.0	50.0
Milwaukee-St. Louis	120	34.2	32.3
Chicago-Milwaukee	300	85.0	86.5
Seattle-Portland	180	83.3	87.6
Oakland-Los Angeles	10	90.0	66.7
Los Angeles-San Diego	198	52.5	94.1
Total short distance:	3578	62.3	70.9
Long distance routes			
NY-Chicago	60	0	1.6
NY-Florida	129	36.4	47.6
Boston-Florida	60	23.3	43.5
NY-Kansas City	60	1.7	1.6
Washington-St. Louis	24	0	0
Chicago-Washington	60	0	1.6
Cincinnati-Washington	60	0	8.1
Chicago-Newport News	60	6.7	4.8
Chicago-Florida	60	28.3	29.0
Chicago-New Orleans	62	4.8	15.8
Chicago-Houston	60	10.0	4.8
Chicago-Los Angeles	60	45.0	41.9
Chicago-Denver	10	80.0	69.4
Chicago-Oakland	50	10.0	15.4
Chicago-Seattle	60	11.7	54.8
Chicago-Minneapolis	34	61.8	69.4
Ft. Worth-Laredo	26	84.6	55.6
Chicago-Spokane	26	7.7	50.0
New Orleans-Los Angeles	26	19.2	38.5
Seattle-San Diego	50	14.0	7.7
Washington-Montreal	59	67.8	87.5
Total long distance:	1096	21.5	30.2
Grand total	5623	53.3	59.3

What are the odds that a traveler will arrive at his destination on time on his Amtrak trip this summer? The adjoining table gives those odds as determined during the past months of May and June by Amtrak for their various routes.

A glance at the long-distance list shows that passengers on Amtrak's "cruise" trains can generally expect to be late at their destinations. For example, the odds on an on-time arrival in June on the TEXAS CHIEF and the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR were just one in ten. The chance of being late was a complete certainty if you rode the BROADWAY LIMITED, NATIONAL LIMITED, or GEORGE WASHINGTON/JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY. In fact, few long-distance trains were on time more than half the time. The best record was generated by the INTER-AMERICAN at 84.6% and by the DENVER ZEPHYR at 80% before the daily operation of the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, with which it is combined, dropped that to 10%. The MONTREALER/WASHINGTONIAN reached 67.8% on-time. Amtrak released no figures on the third international service, the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL. (Amtrak's definition of "on time" is within 5 minutes of schedule.)

The 14% record for the popular COAST STARLIGHT (which averaged 476 passengers daily in June) gives rise to an important point for long distance travelers making connections from that train to the SUPER CHIEF in L.A. for points beyond San Bernardino: If the southbound STARLIGHT is 30 minutes or more late at Oakland, passengers making such connections are routinely bused from Oakland to the SUPER CHIEF. From our own tallies, not shown in Amtrak's table, 61% of these runs were over 30 minutes late in Oakland, thus requiring busing. The moral: if you're traveling mainly for Pacific Coast scenery viewing and the stimulating train ride, and a SUPER CHIEF connection beyond San Bernardino, your chance of seeing the scenery you paid for is 39 out of 100. Thus one should consider stopping over in Southern California, since Amtrak can't get the train reliably into L.A. on time, or taking a bus for your connection if it's short, tho in the latter case one must be warned that buses out of L.A. at night are not too plentiful. One should inquire ahead.

MULTI-MODAL MAN (continued from page 14)

by local enforcement of vehicle codes or if necessary by strengthening existing codes. For example, in our own city of Berkeley we are told that only one police officer is assigned to cite traffic violators in a population of 120,000! Yet a whole corps of meter maids is assigned to watch parking meters, encouraging auto use by making street parking easier. Better to forget the meters and crack down on traffic offenders. People might learn instead to ride the excellent public transportation system that exists.

Parallel complaints must exist everywhere. Local task forces could ferret out such problems, and if necessary, Federal monetary assistance could encourage localities to correct them. The media could help by publicizing the intolerance of offensive drivers. Motorists would soon get the message that a given city is enforcing such and such laws, and significant improvements in the quality of urban life could result. The few, after all, have spoiled it for the many. While it's undoubtedly necessary to reduce the total number of automobiles in cities, a good way of beginning would be to eliminate the incompetent and lawbreaking drivers, thus getting rid of the major nuisances first and effecting a noticeable improvement in the subjectively irritating elements of traffic.

The control of the automobile is only one step in the improvement of our transportation resources. The overwhelming majority of trips in recent trips have been by auto. But it's clear from our contact with RTN readers, who know how to travel well, that the multi-modal man is the model they hold up to the world. Most of the trips our readers report involve all types of conveyances. But too many people feel they must rely upon their private automobiles for all their travel. We are happy to note that Amtrak has seen this trend early, and is making efforts to coordinate inter-modal travel, as in promoting tours that include train, plane, ship, etc. Would that certain large bus companies were so inclined! No transportation mode exists in a vacuum. The multi-modal man is the wave of the future, and it will benefit our country if leaders of different modes get together and plan a truly coordinated system that maximizes comfort and convenience and eliminates wasted effort and resources.

We will say more on this topic in future issues.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Thank you for traveling by train and have a pleasant journey aboard Amtrak's SUPER CHIEF. Due to circumstances beyond Amtrak's control, the First Class Dome Lounge Car is not operating today. Please accept our apology for its absence."

--Notices in SUPER CHIEF rooms on days on which the dome is removed to hold train length to 18 cars

"...stupidly imitating American ways in a land only a fraction the size of the United States, Britain has fallen into a kind of highway madness. ... Within a very few years, the economic and social consequences of automobile madness will compel an abrupt change of public policy in Britain. But what then? Already the railway beds are wilderness."

--Newspaper columnist Russell Kirk in recent quote

"Passenger trains--whether here, in Europe, Japan or anywhere--almost always lose money. Their costs are high, their competition is immense and subsidized, and travel habits have changed... Now the railroads are reimbursed for most of their passenger service expenses, but they have not been recovering all their costs... Amtrak is still in the experimental stage, striving to meet the goals Congress established for a modern, efficient, 'for profit' system. Southern Pacific will benefit from Amtrak success and has committed itself to good service and performance under its contract."

--From Southern Pacific Bulletin, June

"It is ironic that it is this very popularity of the automobile--the most successful and personal form of transportation ever devised--that has led to the pressing problems now facing us in our urban areas: bumper-to-bumper traffic congestion, air and noise pollution. The one-time cure to our transportation problems has become the disease."

--Federal Highway Administrator Norbert T. Tiemann in speech at Bellevue, Washington, July 26

LETTERS (continued from page 5)

coffee and two Danish sweet rolls to Winnipeg; lunch, large, of three thick slabs of roast beef plus much else to Calgary. And they even passed around hot, rolled wet cloths after each meal to wipe off with. Unbelievable, amazing! Western served good food but not near the quantity that CP Air did, but they drown you in decent Franzia champagne.

This simply points out that there are some transportation services which cater to people. The little things do count. Dave Morgan writes in the current Airliners International that the airline you choose does make a difference. And in the days of each railroad running its own trains, the same held true. Now it is Amtrak versus Rock Island, Southern, and Rio Grande, but not on a competitive basis; only in knowing that Amtrak can do better if it would...

Even Greyhound has gone downhill. Their buses get better, but their service doesn't. They run late; they don't answer phones; their terminals are sloppy; and they have the nerve to shoot at Amtrak. Obviously they are only trying to distract the public from seeing their own errors; a sort of Washington-like approach to hiding from the truth.

The fight remains a steep uphill one but just maybe we can get to the top; it will not be easy, and it will be continually frustrating, but with persistence and a refusal to quit, we can get there. Keep RTN at work pricking pins in whomever needs to get the point!

Peter I. Roehm

Rockport, Massachusetts

(Pete, our Northeastern Correspondent, recently took his first position in the rail industry, as Office Manager for Illinois Central Gulf in Boston.--Ed.)

A nostalgia thought for the day (see "Nostalgia," RTN, 1st July issue). One of the pleasures of train travel 10-15 years ago came from the knowledge that each train had a personality all its own, for better or for worse. The PHOEBE SNOW was not the LAURENTIAN and the latter was not the HAVANNA SPECIAL, to mention a few trains of my own youthful travels. Frequently the differences were no more than a youngster could stuff into a suitcase--a picture menu from the dining car, a pack of matches, or some train stationery. On the other hand, one also remembers long hours spent in the coaches of the New York Central's CHICAGOAN staring at reproduction paintings of the Masters as the miles clicked by--memories that are forever packed away in the mind. The little touches, did they all cost that much?

From my limited experience with Amtrak, however, I would have to say that quite a bit more thought will have to be given to retaining or reasserting the individuality of their name trains in order to prevent a dull, bright sameness from settling over all the little differences that build pleasant memories!

John Connor

Millburn, New Jersey

That was a most intelligent and balanced issue, the first one of July. I especially enjoyed the various efforts to attain some perspective on the broad issue of "What's wrong with public transport?" The Editor's reflections on the validity of nostalgia were interesting tho perhaps a bit optimistic. It is true that more people are going into the broad category of jobs defined by economists as "service," and that the public is becoming more sophisticated and larger numbers of people hope to find (for example) something better in the way of dining service than the McDonald's Hamburgers which Amtrak seems to think the wave of the future.

The question is, though, whether demand can be matched by supply. That is, whether people can be found to give the quality personalized service on trains which was once offered to an elite of Lucius Beebes, at prices which the middle-class public is able and/or willing to pay. I suspect that the railway is about the last place to which youthful dropouts from routine jobs will turn; they will understandably prefer the independence offered by a small business catering to specialized tastes, like the manufacturing of stained glass for restoration of buildings that has appeared in Toronto. Railways are of necessity supreme examples of the division of labour carried to an extreme, and much of the hostility they've engendered ever since the 1830's has been based on a perception of that "dehumanizing" quality. Perhaps in practical terms the best hope would be to sublease dining and bar franchises to small groups who would have the incentive to make them first class and distinctive.

Fred H. Matthews

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Your second issue of July just arrived and, as usual, I am reading it with keen interest.

I must confess to being one of those "dumb" railfans who use the train whenever we can in the hope that the more the service is used the more it will improve. Yet when it comes to recommending train travel to my confreres and friends, I admit to having grave misgivings. For example, I have persuaded a colleague of mine to make a trip from Washington to St. Louis and return by train in mid-August. We will be traveling together and I have finally obtained the reservations (after more than two weeks' delay while Amtrak tried to decide whether to continue the train or not--I can forgive Amtrak <u>this</u> delay, altho there have been many other delays that allowed of no such easy explanation) and have purchased the tickets (forfeiting my clergy discount for the simple reason that the poor agent had already spent a full hour trying to get the reservations and figuring out the <u>regular</u> fare). So everything is arranged, and I am trying to prepare my confrere psychologically for whatever may happen. I have told him, in so many words, not to consider this a way of getting to St. Louis and back, but to anticipate it as a very uncertain adventure during which anything at all may happen. He has traveled by train only once before in his life, and that was a pleasant experience. I am trying to break it to him gently that a train ride is not <u>always</u> a pleasant experience.

Well, having brought things to this stage, I was reading along in your latest issue and came, on page 4, to your editor's note and your devastating question: "Should we advise riders to take the NATIONAL LTD,...?" The NATIONAL LTD is, of course, precisely the train we are taking... My dilemma now is whether to make some excuse and arrange for both of us to fly (infinitely simpler) or to stick to our original plan and entrust ourselves to the train for which you obviously have little respect. As it is, we cannot get our roomettes out of Washington, but must take the coach connection from here to Harrisburg. That is all right, however, since in a coach one can at least arrange to be on the west side for the beautiful ride up along the Susquehanna from Perryville to Harrisburg (whereas if one's roomette is on the east side, all one sees is a rocky cliff a few feet from one's window for two hours or so)...

I hope you realize that I am being over-dramatic about this dilemma. We will stick to our plans and pray for the best. And if it turns out that the trip is really bad, he will go back to his planes and I will continue to be a "dumb" railfan suffering all sorts of discomfort in my irrational loyalty to rail passenger service.

Christopher Latimer

Washington, D. C.

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